

MEASURING PRAGMATIC SKILLS OF CHILDREN FROM SPECIFIC TARGET GROUPS: USE OF THE EPVS

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Background: Children with Down Syndrome, Autism and Cleft Lip and Palate are at risk for communication problems. The new screening instrument EPVs: Lists for Evaluation of Pragmatic Skills (Cocquyt & Zink, 2010) was used to investigate the differences between these three specific target groups and typically developing children.

Method: EPV1 was used to compare the pragmatic skills of 8 children with Down Syndrome (age: 24 to 43 months; language age: 10 to 15 months) with those of 22 typically developing children (age: 10 to 15 months). EPV2 was used to compare the pragmatic skills of 15 children with Autism (age: 22 to 94 months; developmental age: 16 to 30 months) with those of 24 typically developing children (age: 16 to 30 months). EPV2 was also used to compare the pragmatic skills of 8 children with (non syndrome) Cleft Lip and Palate (age: 24 months), with those of 24 typically developing children with the same age.

Results: Children with Down Syndrome follow the same development as typically developing children but the switch to verbal communication emerges later than in typically developing children. Children with Autism showed several significant differences. Most striking differences are of a qualitative nature. Children with Cleft Lip and Palate show more difficulties in starting up and participating in conversations.

Conclusion / take home message: Using the EPVs seems to be very valuable for measuring the pragmatic skills of children with developmental problems. The information from answers about contexts, makes differential diagnosis easier and provides useful information for refining the intervention plan.